

Week #4 Story: Submitted by a volunteer attorney with Indiana Legal Services

This is a story of one family, the complicated circumstances that led to an eviction filing, the challenges of navigating the system, and ultimately how a supportive program helped resolve the situation.

Maria (not her real name) recently visited the Tenant Assistance Project (TAP) Tenant Clinic seeking help. Her landlord was seeking to evict Maria and her family.

Maria is a single mother, and has resided in the 3BR apartment with her now college-aged daughter and 13 year old son since 2017. Her current lease ends in July. Maria is employed full-time at a local hospital, has a bi-weekly weekly salary of \$1,500.00 and her base monthly rent is \$1,393.00. At least 50% of Maria's salary is used to pay for rent and utilities every month. She is currently looking for additional part-time employment, possibly as a ride-share driver in order to make ends meet. Maria fell behind in her rent payments when her ex-husband fell behind in sending child support payments. She owes the landlord over \$5,100.00 in back rent and fees.

Maria started by contacting the Township Trustee's Office, and scheduled an appointment at their first-available time—which was four weeks away. When she called in for that appointment, she was told that she was ineligible to apply for financial assistance because her monthly income was \$500 over the income eligibility limits. She hadn't been told this when she scheduled her meeting 4 weeks prior. Maria was devastated. She started contacting other agencies and churches, with no luck. Maria has no family or friends locally that she and her son can stay with if they are evicted. They will have to sleep in the winter cold in her car.

A volunteer TAP attorney was assigned to Maria's case, and advised Maria as to her legal options, which included keeping what little money she still had, and voluntarily vacating her home of 9 years to move to a less expensive apartment. The attorney also referred her to the court-employed Navigator to see about additional financial assistance or alternative housing if required.

In the end, the TAP attorney was able to mediate an agreement between Maria and the property manager. The parties agreed to an adjusted timeline of five weeks (vs the court's standard three weeks), and the landlord agreed to accept partial payments from Maria, waive late fees, defer Maria's payment of attorney fees until March, make the case record temporarily confidential, and dismiss the eviction and permanently seal the case from public view, so long as Maria pays in full, including the payment of her February 2026 rent by the agreed to deadline.

Because of St. Luke's relationship with the attorney, and because of the financial support from the Connections Books & Gifts shop that funds our assistance program, St. Luke's was able to provide some of the funds Maria needed to get back on her feet. Thank you St. Luke's!